

# Chapter 18: Park and Recreation Master Plan

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## Introduction

Appleton last adopted a **Park and Recreation Master Plan** in 2010, updating a series of prior plans dating to 1965. The 2010 plan was meant to provide recommendations for the period from 2010 through 2014. It is the City's policy to update this plan every five years both to provide guidance concerning park and recreation facilities and operations, and to meet requirements of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for grant funding eligibility. This current update will address the years 2017 through 2021.

## Key Accomplishments

- Multiple Joint Use Agreements with the Appleton Area School District, including but not limited to Einstein Middle School, Highlands Elementary School and mowing, parking, and pool agreements.
- The City constructed a Gazebo at Lutz Park in 2009.
- Children's Week program was developed by the Parks and Recreation Department in 2010. This includes a variety of programs for kids and an annual parade.
- The City was awarded Green Tier Legacy Community Status in 2010.
- Miracle League Field was constructed at Appleton Memorial Park in 2010.
- Two tennis courts were installed at Einstein Park in 2010.
- The City achieved bronze-level bicycle friendly community status through the League of American Bicyclists in 2013.
- The City's dance program was rebranded, becoming the Unity Dance Academy in 2013.
- Houdini Plaza was reconstructed in 2013.
- Tennis Courts were replaced at Summit Park in 2013.
- Renovation and stormwater improvements were completed at Reid Golf Course in 2013.
- Apple Hill Trail was constructed in 2014.
- A new amphitheater and stage was constructed at Pierce Park in 2014.
- The Learning Pathway for Youth was installed in Pierce Park in 2014.
- The skateboard park at Telulah Park was constructed in 2014.
- The Parks and Recreation Department assumed management of the Scheig Center and Appleton Memorial Park Gardens in 2014.
- The City developed master plans for Appleton Memorial Park and the Scheig Center in 2015.
- The City's Parks and Recreation Department became the sole operator of all golf course operations at Reid Golf Course in 2015.
- The City developed an ADA Transition Plan for public parks and city facilities in 2015.
- Pioneer Park was established in 2015.
- The City installed synthetic turf in the playground area at City Park in 2015.
- A new website for the Parks and Recreation Department was launched in 2015.
- The City developed its Trails Master Plan in 2016.
- The City finalized plans for redevelopment of the Erb Park pool in 2016.
- Ellen Kort Peace Park was named in 2016.
- Creation of an on-line Prescription Trails mapping tool.

## Statement of Need

A growing body of research provides evidence of the importance of parks, open space, and leisure programming to the environmental, social, and economic health of communities. Sufficient parks and open spaces provide habitat for plants and animals, contribute to effective stormwater management, and offer additional environmental benefits. Parks and open spaces enhance the value of nearby property, and special facilities such as downtown plazas or event spaces can be significant contributors to commercial vitality. Park facilities and programming enhance quality of life while facilitating the social interaction of community residents, thereby making the city a more desirable place to live.

The Appleton **Parks and Recreation Master Plan** is designed to guide the Parks and Recreation Department, city officials, advisory committees, and other partners and stakeholders as they strive to provide the best possible facilities and leisure activities for the citizens of Appleton. To do this, the Appleton Parks and Recreation Department operates with the following mission statement:

*"Building communities and enriching lives where we live, work and play."*

## Planning Process

The process of developing a plan starts with analysis of existing conditions and trends regarding physical, environmental, social and economic aspects of the City. The 2016 Comprehensive Plan update process included the following phases:

1. Data Gathering and Analysis. During this phase, background information was gathered and the majority of public input activities were conducted.
2. Alternatives Development. During this phase chapter elements were updated and discussed with the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (CPSC). Key trends pertaining to each element were identified and discussed. Objectives and policies were updated along with existing condition information.
3. Plan Adoption. During this phase the draft Plan was brought to the public through a series of open houses and other outreach activities. The CPSC recommended the Plan for adoption and a public hearing was held by the Plan Commission. Finally, the Common Council reviewed and adopted the amended Plan.

For the 2016 Comprehensive Plan update, significant public participation occurred throughout the following activities:

- Interactive Project Website
- Regular Newsletters
- Online Survey
- Press Releases
- Meetings in a Box (self-facilitated issues and opportunities exercise)
- March 2016 Issues and Opportunities Workshops
- March 2016 Annual ADI Awards Banquet (plan your downtown exercise)
- Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups
- 3-day Downtown Design Charrette in May 2016
- Monthly Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meetings
- Downtown Sub Committee Meetings
- Draft and Final Plan Open House
- Public Hearing



*Figure 1 March 2016 Issues & Opportunities Workshop*

## Summary of Past Plans

Appleton's most recent Park and Recreation Master Plan was adopted in 2010. The 2010 plan was meant to provide recommendations for the period from 2010 through 2014. It is the City's policy to update this plan every five years both to provide guidance concerning park and recreation facilities and operations, and to meet requirements of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for grant funding eligibility. This current update will address the years 2017 through 2021. Other past plans adopted by the City include:

- 2005-2009 Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- 2000-2004 Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- 1995-1999 Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- 1994 – Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- 1987 – Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- 1981 – Parks and Open Space Master Plan
- 1975 – Parks and Recreation Plan
- 1969 – Parks and Recreation Plan



In addition to these master plans, the City has adopted a number of plans for various parks and trails. A Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for the City is budgeted for 2017.

## Description of the Planning Region

### Social Characteristics

See Chapter 4 Issues and Opportunities for a detailed discussion of population size, trends and projections; ethnicities; employment; age characteristics; and economic conditions.

### Physical Characteristics of the Region

See Chapter 8 Agriculture, Natural, Historic, and Cultural Resources for a detailed discussion of topography, water resources, climate, soils, flora and fauna.

## Park Facilities and Recreational Programs Inventory

Appleton maintains a diverse assortment of parks, open spaces, and other recreational facilities. This section of the plan is intended to define key terms and identify the existing system resources. The City's park and recreation inventory is discussed in the context of objective standards adopted by the Parks and Recreation Department.

### Definitions and Park Classifications

- **Active Recreation Site**  
A park designed primarily for active recreation of one or more age groups. This type of design may have as its primary feature playfields, playground apparatus, ball fields, ball courts, or a combination thereof.
- **Bicycle or Pedestrian Trail**  
A path designed for use by non-motorized means of transportation, and specifically for bicycles and/or pedestrians, although roller blades, skateboards, and other devices may be allowed on some facilities. Unlike on-street bicycle lanes, trails and paths are separated from driving lanes when located adjacent to roadways. Typical improvements for this type of park feature may include trail heads, bike parking, and signage to mark the trail system.
- **Community Garden**  
Community gardens are small plots of land made available to residents of the community to grow plants either for ornamental purposes or for food. Areas for vegetable gardens are typically located in parks or greenway corridors. They may also be located on other community-owned land or on land made available by other property owners such as utility right-of-way. Ornamental or flower gardens may also be located in parks, or on key sites within neighborhoods where they can contribute to creating a sense of community. Examples may include boulevard medians or neighborhood gateways.
- **Open Space or Passive Recreation Site**  
A park primarily designed for picnicking, walking, and other non-organized recreation interests. This type of facility often emphasizes natural settings and de-emphasizes active recreation areas. It may also include stormwater facilities or undeveloped natural areas where no uses have been identified.

- **Play Structure**  
A play system which incorporates a variety of functions such as slides, climbing bars, suspended platforms and railings interconnected in one unit. Structures are usually sized for preschool and elementary users with structure height and apparatus complexity being the determining criteria.
- **Single/Special Purpose Park Facilities**  
These facilities are unique to the community. Examples include zoos, marinas, fairgrounds, and historical features. Due to the varying characteristics of these resources, the user age group is often widespread. The service area may include the entire community or entire region. No average park size or service area exists.
- **Water Trail**  
A water trail is a route planned for non-motorized boat travel. Typical improvements for this type of park feature may include launching facilities, portages, and signage to mark the route.
- **Golf Course**  
The City owns and operates Reid Golf Course, located at 1100 E Fremont Street. Reid Golf Course is an award winning 18-hole municipal golf course located in the heart of Appleton, featuring excellent course design, full service pro shop and relaxing clubhouse with outstanding service to include food and beverage, practice range and club and cart rental. During winter months, the facility is also used as a winter recreation center and is advertised in the City Guide for sledding.

## Park Categories

The following park classifications have been utilized in preparing this update. These classifications reflect the diversity of Appleton's parks and the unique nature of some of its facilities

- **Pocket Parks or Mini Parks**  
These are small parks that tend to meet a specific need. Pocket parks provide greenery, a place to sit outdoors, and sometimes a children's playground. They may be created around a monument, historic marker or art project. They are often created on a single urban lot or remnant parcel where larger land assembly is not warranted, or difficult to accomplish.
- **Neighborhood Parks**  
Neighborhood parks are designed to provide both active and passive short-term recreation activities. The primary users range from 5-15 years of age. However, informal recreation opportunities cater to groups of all ages. Neighborhood parks should provide play apparatus for both preschoolers and school age children. Other facilities include shelters, open play lawn areas, multi-use paved court areas, areas for field games with possible limited seating, wading pools, horseshoe pits, outdoor ice rinks, and some off-street parking. Passive areas of neighborhood parks are wooded, scenic, and well landscaped. Facilities in the passive areas are limited but should include picnic areas (complete with tables and grills), drinking fountains, and pathways.

The service area for a neighborhood park should include the entire adjoining neighborhood. If the park contains some unique features, such as a wading pool, the service area may be slightly larger. The average neighborhood park serves from 500 to

2,500 people. Neighborhood parks commonly range from 5-10 acres in size with a service area radius between 0.25 and 0.5 miles.

- **Community Parks**

This type of park is designed to serve several neighborhoods while minimizing park travel distance. Though community parks are designed to accommodate all age groups, most activities cater to the active recreation needs of junior and senior high school students and adults. Although size is not always a sound criterion for classifying parks, it is generally recognized that community parks are more spacious than neighborhood parks or playgrounds. Community parks provide a combination of intensive and non-intensive development ranging from play apparatus to trail systems. In addition to the kinds of facilities provided at neighborhood parks, community parks may provide facilities such as swimming pools, picnic areas, elaborate playfields, game courts, ice skating, shelters, sanitary facilities, and ample off-street parking.

Community parks have an effective service area of one to two miles (or sometimes more) and can serve from 2,500 to 20,000 people. Most community parks have an average size of between 20 and 35 acres.

- **Greenspace or Open Space Parks**

In addition to providing numerous recreational experiences, these types of parks provide environmental quality and act as land use buffers. Additional attributes help break up development congestion and provide aesthetic quality. Most urban greenspace or open space parks contain natural areas such as woodlands, floodplains, wetlands, rock outcroppings and scenic views. Common recreational developments include biking, hiking, jogging, bridle paths and cross country ski trail systems. Some active recreation facilities are provided where land is conducive to that type of development, however, it is preferred that these areas stay in a predominantly passive state if possible.

Parks where trail systems are developed serve the entire community. Though no set standard exists, several communities use a ratio of one acre for every 1,000 residents as a basis to project community demand.

- **Greenway Corridors**

Greenways tend to be linear features that may wind through neighborhoods, often connecting larger park sites. These may be comprised of wetlands, floodplains, and other environmental features, or include stormwater management facilities. Greenways may be undeveloped, or often contain minimal improvements such as paths.

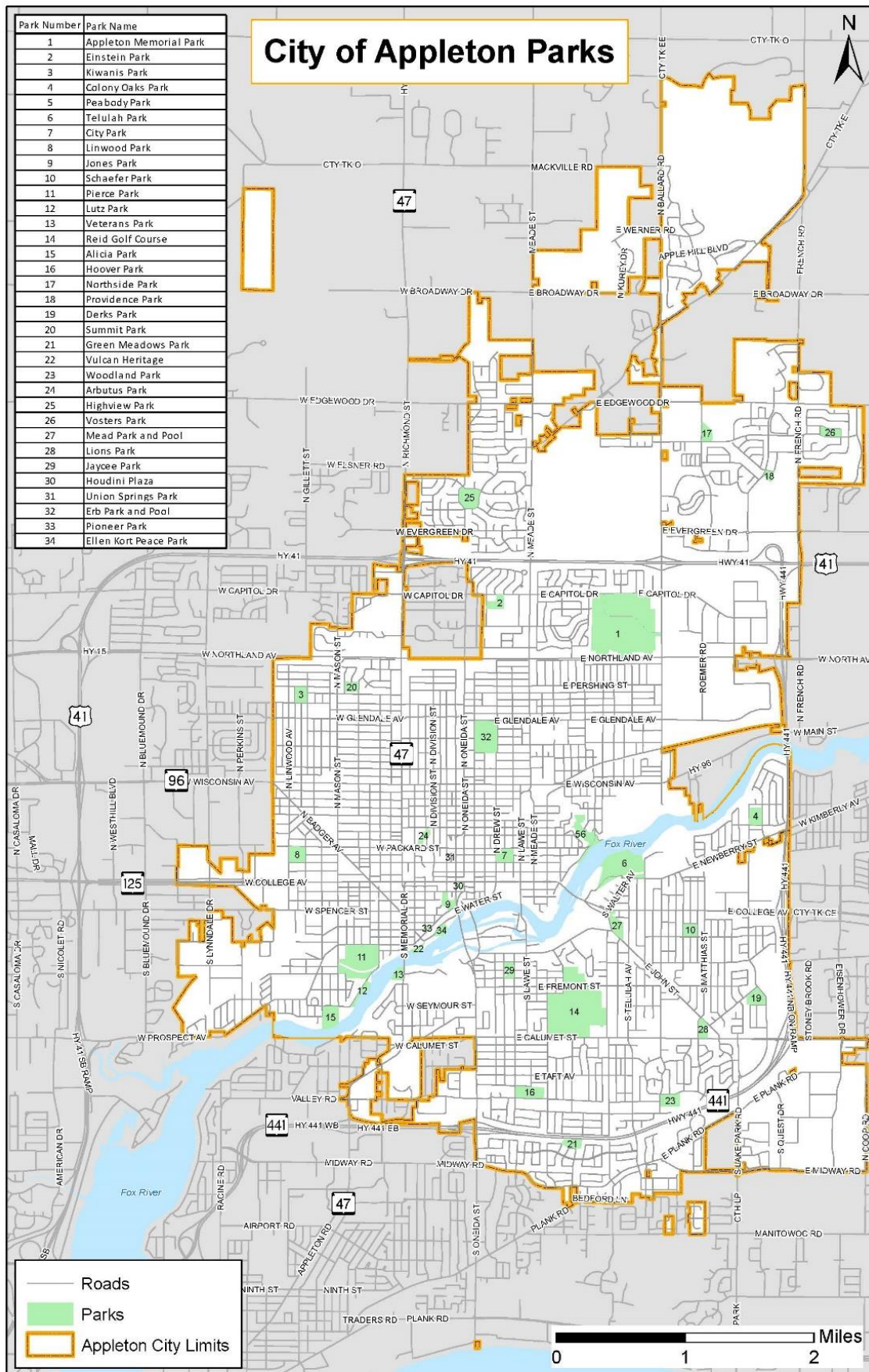
- **Urban Plazas**

Urban plazas are places for people to gather together and host events and other functions that contribute to civic life. These spaces can be used for a range of formal and informal community activities, such as farmers markets, concerts, art shows, and other community activities. They are located within the more densely-developed and commercial parts of the community, and unlike other parks, tend to be predominantly developed with impervious surfaces and structure. Houdini Plaza and Soldier's Square are urban plazas within Appleton.

- **Special Recreation Areas**

This "catch-all" term is used to describe a wide variety of other park and recreation facilities. Examples include Reid Golf Course, and Union Springs.







## Site Facilities

The City's parks offer a wide range of facilities for public use. The following table indicates which facilities are present for a given park. An "X" indicates that the facility is present for the park, while a number indicates how many of those facilities are present, if more than one.

	Address	Acreage	Baseball/Softball	Soccer Fields	Tennis Courts * = Lighted, y = youth striped also	Pickleball Court	Basketball Courts * = Lighted	Playground Equipment * = ADA Accessible	Picnic Pavilion * = w/food prep area	Restrooms	Gazebo / Open Air Pavilion	Swimming Pool w/ wading area	Volleyball * = in pool area	Disc Golf Course
<b>Community Parks</b>														
Appleton Memorial (AMP)	1620 Witzke Blvd.	139.0	7					X*	X*	X				
Erb	1800 N. Morrison St.	27.75			2*y		X	X*	X*	X		X		
Pierce	1035 W. Prospect Av.	33.62	X	X	3y		X	X*	X*	X	X			X
Telulah	1300 E. Newberry St.	39.3	X	X				X*	2*	X				X
<b>Neighborhood Parks</b>														
Alicia	1301 W. Cedar St.	12.0						X*	X	X				
Arbutus	431 W. Atlantic St.	3.44						X*						
City	500 E. Franklin St.	8.0						X*	X	X				
Colony Oaks	801 N. Briarcliff Dr.	7.88		X	X		X	X*	X	X			X	
Derks	3220 E. Guyette St.	9.07						X*	X*	X				
Einstein	3200 N. Durkee St.	6.6	X		2	X	X	X		X				
Green Meadows	65 Pheasant Ct.	5.6		X	2	X		X*	X	X				
Highview	110 W. Wayfarer Ln.	12.59		X	X	X	X	X*	X*	X				
Hoover	600 E. Roeland Ave.	11.6	2	X				X*	X	X				
Jaycee	1200 S. Jefferson St.	4.0	X				X	X*	X	X			X	
Jones	301 W. Lawrence St.	5.75					X*	X*	X*	X				
Kiwanis	2315 N. Nicholas St.	6.5	X				X	X*	X*	X				
Linwood	401 N. Douglas St.	9.5	X		2*	X	X	X*	X	X				
Lions	1920 S. Matthias St.	4.4	X					X*	X	X				
Lutz	1320 S. Lutz St.	2.7						X*		X	X			
Mead	1430 E. John St.	8.5						X*				X	X*	
Peabody	601 N. Green Bay Rd.	16.2					X	X*	X*	X				
Providence	4620 Providence Ave.	3.33						X*						
Schaefer	610 S. Buchanan St.	6.4					X	X*	X*	X				
Summit	2423 N. Summit St.	5.49		X	2	X	X	X*						
Veterans	1201 S. Memorial Dr.	2.0						X*						
Vosters	4200 E. Ashbury Dr.	5.1						X*						
Vulcan Heritage	535 W. Water St.	2.05												
Woodland	1815 Schaefer Circle	8.7	X					X*			X			

## Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment

### Public Input Assessment

The **Park and Recreation Master Plan** was prepared with considerable public input beginning with the visioning process for the **Comprehensive Plan**, which began in 2016. It included several public meetings, workshops, a community bike tour, a 3-day design workshop, and a community survey. Chapter 3 of the Comprehensive Plan documents the results of the visioning process. A full copy of park related input and the community survey results are provided in the Appendices.

Key themes from the workshops and survey included:

- The number one activity that park users engage in is walking, followed by playgrounds, biking, and grilling/picnic. The following chart shows the responses for all activities.

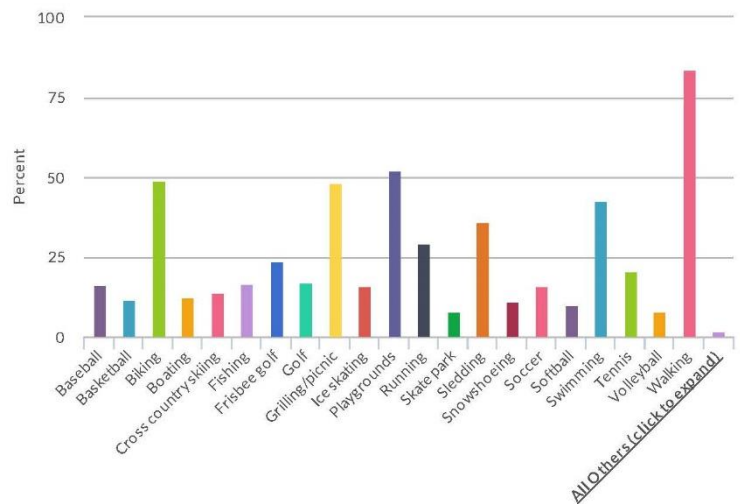


Figure 2 How residents use the Park System - Community Survey responses.

- When asked “what specific park amenities or trails do you feel are needed (and where) within the City?” the most frequent responses included:
  - Biking and walking trails
  - Enhanced river access and recreational opportunities
  - Dog facilities
  - Splash pads
- 81.2% of respondents indicated that existing parks offer equipment that satisfies the needs of all age groups.
- 19.6 % of respondents rated the overall quality of recreational programs that their household has participated in as excellent. 51.0 percent rated these programs as good.
- Of those who participated in Department programs, the most commonly participated-in activities included special events, family fun events, and youth swim lessons.
- When asked “What recreational programs, leagues, and educational opportunities would you like to see offered by the Parks and Recreation Department?” the most frequent responses included:
  - Yoga
  - Dance
  - Variety of programming for different age groups

## Recreation Facility Standards

The National Parks and Recreation Association has established standards for the provision of some park facilities. These standards are presented as a basis for evaluating the existing park and open space resources of the City. Specifically, the National Parks and Recreation Association recommends the following standards:

- provision of two acres of neighborhood park land per 1,000 community residents; and
- provision of eight acres of community park land per 1,000 community residents.

These standards result in a target of 10 acres of neighborhood and community park land per 1,000 residents. This has been a standard that has been used for decades, but has been more recently used as a general guideline, as the National Recreation and Parks Association now recommends each city establish its own standard. Appleton's population is estimated by the Wisconsin Department of Administration to be 73,150 residents as of 2013, and will grow to 76,370 by the year 2020. These numbers result in a current need for about 730 acres of park land, growing to 760 acres by 2020. The following table presents a summary of the acreage of existing neighborhood and community parks in Appleton.

**Area of Existing Park Land in the City of Appleton**

Neighborhood Parks		Community Parks		Special Areas	
Alicia	12.0	Appleton Memorial	139	Houdini Plaza	1.0
Arbutus	3.44	Erb	27.75	Reid Golf Course	107.6
City	8.0	Pierce	33.62	Union Springs	0.1
Colony Oaks	7.88	Telulah	39.3	USA Youth Sports Complex	80
Derks	9.07				
Einstein	6.6				
Ellen Kort Peace	3.38				
Green Meadow	5.6				
Highview	12.59			Apple Creek Trail	10.4
Hoover	11.6			Apple Hill Trail	0.73
Jaycee	4.0			Newberry Trail	10.7
Jones	5.75			Highview Trail	2.4
Kiwanis	6.5			North Island Trail	1.4
Linwood	9.5			Providence Trail	4.6
Lions	4.4				
Lutz	2.7				
Mead	8.5				
North Side	8.36				
Peabody	16.2				
Pioneer	0.52				
Providence	3.33				
Schaefer	6.4				
Summit	5.49				
Veterans	2.0				
Voster	5.1				
Vulcan Heritage	2.05				
Woodland	8.7				
Total Acreage	179.66	Total Acreage	239.67	Total	138.93
Acreage Standard (2013)	146.3	Acreage Standard (2013)	585.2		
Acreage Standard (2020)	152.74	Acreage Standard (2020)	611.0		

Source: City of Appleton Parks and Recreation Department



A second set of standards relates to the distribution of parks within a community. The goal is to provide relatively easy access to park facilities for all residents of the community. In addition to the distance standards here, access should consider whether there are significant barriers that may prevent some residents from conveniently accessing parks. Busy streets, for instance, may prohibit small children from walking or riding a bike to a park, at least without adult supervision. The following standards are recommended.

- a distribution of neighborhood parks so that at least one is located within  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of every residence; and
- a distribution of community parks so that one is located within two miles of every residence.

As the table shows, the City of Appleton exceeds adopted standards for the provision of neighborhood parks, but lacks sufficient community parks. This is ameliorated to an extent by the presence of Plamann Park, which is not owned or programmed by the City, but located near the City's north side. The 257-acre park is owned and maintained by Outagamie County and features many of the amenities expected within a community park, such as ball fields, shelters, a swimming beach, and trails. Not including Plamann Park, Appleton has approximately 240 acres of community parks, falling 345 acres short of the current standard, and leaving a deficit of 371 acres by 2020. Including the 139 acres of other park and recreation areas, Appleton's Park and Recreation Department maintains a total of 558 acres. This equates to 7.57 acres per thousand residents, and is projected to be 7.31 acres per thousand residents in 2020 if no additional park space is created.

The map on the following page depicts the service territories of all of the parks in Appleton. Most of the existing city and its future growth area is adequately covered by the distribution of community parks. The exception to this is the far southeastern part of the service area. This includes the Southpoint Commerce Park (a business park) along with areas that are planned for future residential use.

Service area coverage for neighborhood parks is not as consistent. Several parts of the community are not served by neighborhood parks within the desired  $\frac{1}{2}$ -mile radius. While the lack of coverage is not a concern over parts of the community that are dedicated to business or industrial parks, there are five areas within the developed part of the community in which coverage may be considered to be inadequate.

- The area northeast of the intersection of Northland Avenue and Richmond Street is a primarily residential neighborhood that is currently within the Town of Grand Chute. Although beyond  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile, residents of this area may travel to Einstein Park without having to cross any major streets.
- The second area of concern lies north of Wisconsin Avenue and west of Richmond Street. This is a densely-developed residential neighborhood providing no obvious sites for a new park. Residents may travel north to Kiwanis Park or Summit Park without significant obstacles. South of Wisconsin Avenue, the City may partner with Lincoln Elementary School to help meet service needs.
- North of Wisconsin Avenue, between Meade Street and Ballard Road, there is another neighborhood area that does not have adequate park facilities. These three streets have heavy traffic that can deter residents from traveling to parks outside of the neighborhood. Opportunities to provide park facilities in the area may include collaboration with other entities such as the Appleton Area School District and registered neighborhoods in the



City. For Example, Huntley Houses Neighborhood community fitness project is currently planned to be implemented at Huntley Elementary School. Huntley's campus serves as a de facto park for the area.

- The fourth area of concern lies north of Highway 441, south of Calumet Street, west of Oneida Street, and east of Memorial Drive. Portions of this area lie within Appleton and the Town of Menasha. It is planned for predominantly commercial and multi-family residential uses. There is vacant land located within this area, and as it develops, the City of Appleton should pursue park dedication. Opportunities to provide park facilities in the area may include collaboration with other entities.
- The fifth and final area of concern lies in the southeast corner of the City, adjacent to the Town and Village of Harrison and the City of Menasha, and was noted as an area in need of a community park above. It includes the Southpoint Commerce Park (a business park) along with areas that are planned for future residential use. Opportunities to provide park facilities in the area may include collaboration with other entities.

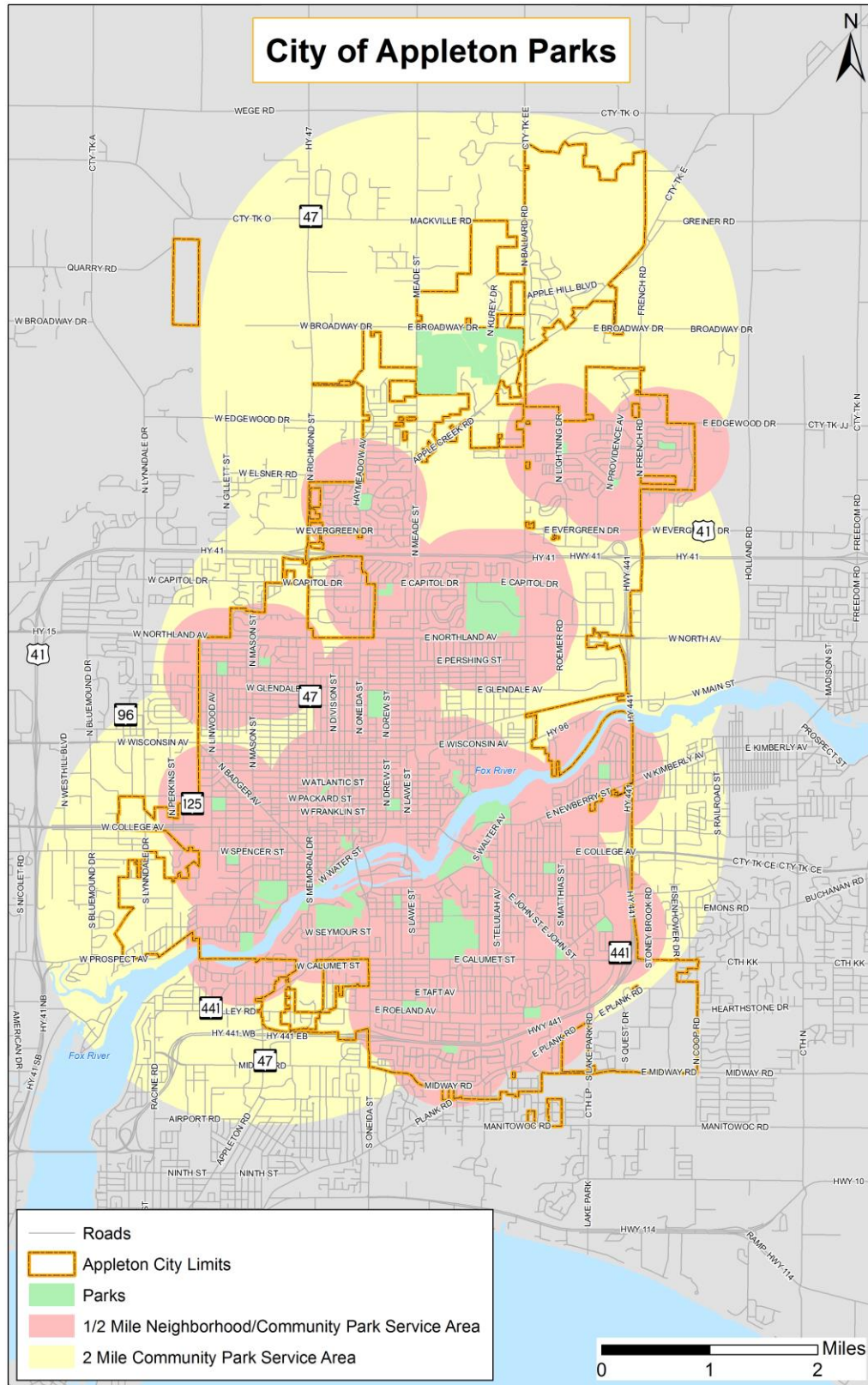


Figure 3 City of Appleton Park Service Areas

In addition to population growth, anticipated development patterns may create a need to evaluate the adequacy of existing park and recreation facilities. In particular, the City has established goals to encourage mixed-use and residential redevelopment or infill in specific parts of the urban core, including the downtown, the industrial flats, and the Richmond Street, South Oneida Street and Wisconsin Avenue Corridors.

Residential densities in these redevelopment areas are anticipated to be higher than elsewhere in Appleton, increasing the potential number of users for existing parks within the area. At the same time, residents moving into these new developments are likely to have a demographic profile different than that of the community as a whole. Urban mixed-use and multi-family development tends to attract a higher proportion of singles and childless couples. This suggests that future needs may be less focused on play structures and other amenities for school-age children, and more on adult-oriented active and passive uses. Multi-purpose trails, pocket parks, community gardens, and urban plazas are examples of the kinds of facilities to consider. The **Downtown Plan** and **Fox River Corridor Plan** contain suggestions of specific sites to consider.



*Figure 4 The City is working to develop a continuous trail network along the Fox River, including over two train trestle bridges.*

New park land acquired along the Fox River, remnant parcels bordering the Wisconsin Central (Canadian National) Railroad, and privately-owned and maintained facilities within development projects can be considered to meet future park needs.

### Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

The 2011-2016 Wisconsin Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan serves as a resource for state and local outdoor recreation planning. The SCORP is updated every five years, and is used to help allocate federal funds equitably among local communities. The current SCORP identifies several key trends which provide important context for the update of Chapter 18.

- Access to outdoor recreation is an important predictor of community health and wellness. The SCORP encourages more active outdoor recreation and identifies those recreation facility types that provide the greatest health benefit.
- Urban populations are growing and the benefits and significance of urban parks – improved health, community ties, and economy are therefore increasingly important.
- Strong public and private partnerships are important for fostering recreational development and opportunities for all citizens.

### Parks and Recreation Responsibilities and Needs

This section of the report summarizes additional key findings which impact the Department's ability to meet its mission.

- Since 2001, six developed parks were added to the Appleton park system (Derks, Highview, Pioneer, Providence, Vosters and Vulcan Heritage). There are also 2 undeveloped parks in the current system (North Side Park and Ellen Kort Peace Park). Since 2001, 3 pavilions, 5 playgrounds, and a skate park have been added.

- Since 2001, The City has had approximately 202 mowable acres added to its responsibilities. 55.22 acres were added from 2001-2007, 126.61 acres were added from 2008-2013, 11.34 acres were added from 2014-2015, and 9.6 acres have been added since 2015.
- Large tracts of additional mowing acreage takes time, but it is the continual addition of boulevards, triangles and double frontage lots that really eat up staff resources. The transport, loading and unloading of equipment at various small sites is very time consuming. The trimming and weed control at these numerous small sites is also very time consuming. These sites are high-visibility areas along streets which cannot be left to become unsightly. Additional parks and pavilions need to be cleaned as well. Garbage is collected seven days a week from April through September. The Parks Department 14 fulltime laborer positions in 1998. Today it has 9, and has become very reliant on seasonal labor, which has become increasingly difficult to recruit.
- The City's Recreation Division's goal is to provide every citizen a wide variety of recreational experiences through high quality facilities at convenient locations that offer diverse program offerings and events. However, for a city the size of Appleton, the Recreation Division has fallen behind in its ability to provide indoor recreation opportunities due to lack of available and adequate space. Each year the City spends approximately \$107,000 in facility rental to outside sources in order to provide indoor recreational programming. This breakdown includes:
  - City Center Studios: \$45,000
  - Appleton School District: \$53,500
  - Reid Golf Course: \$8,500
- In addition to the locations noted above that the division pays rent to for program use, there are numerous locations throughout the City that could be coordinated with for the use of program space. Some examples of these would include:
  - Karate America East
  - Karate America North
  - Appleton Public Library
  - Xcel Sports
  - Appleton Ice Center
  - Eagle Flats
  - Oneida Heights
  - Scheig Center
  - Conference room at Facilities and Grounds Operation Center
  - Building For Kids
- One of the main challenges the City faces by not having indoor programming space is the basic loss of control the Department has as it relates to scheduling of space, quality of facility, cleanliness of facility and programming needs. This loss of control also affects customers as there is confusion with inconsistency of programming space, changing of locations based on the owner's needs, and the uncertainty of the future. The staff time it takes to coordinate with outside groups for use of space is another concern. City staff



*Figure 5 Temporary obstacle course in Peabody Park*



spends a considerable amount of time seeking out adequate sites for programming needs, completing a site analysis, developing agreements for use of space and working out compensation/billing procedures.

- Individuals are seeking leisure opportunities that are high quality, affordable and provide a balance with their work/family life. Parks and Recreation does just that. Over the past few years, the City has worked to define, promote and deliver recreation program experiences. Through customer satisfaction surveys, The Recreation Department has been able to gauge what the community values in recreation services, why they are choosing our parks and recreation to meet their recreational needs, and how the City can continue to deliver a program experience for members of the community that is consistent with our mission and vision.
- The success of City efforts has been made apparent by the 56% participation increase seen over the past four years in recreation programs/activities. The City has over 150 programs with over 820 class options. The City evaluates programs on a regular basis and continues to develop new programs/partnerships that meet the community's needs.
- The City has added over 15 new programs in the last two years that have allowed for the expansion of youth and adult instructional programs, enrichment programs, health/wellness related programs and special events.
- One particular area of growth has been youth sports leagues. All City youth sports leagues are driven by the same core philosophy, to introduce and develop the skills needed for lifelong enjoyment of sports in a setting that is inclusive, engaging, and centered on FUN and sportsmanship. Families are looking for their kids to be involved in organized sports but they don't want it to be an overwhelming time commitment, high cost or overly competitive. The City is able to meet many of these needs with the leagues. Trends in the City's Youth Sports program over the past two years include:
  - Transition to evening leagues for our summer youth baseball/softball/t-ball programs led to a 63% increase in participation.
  - Restructuring of the youth basketball league to include younger ages drove the participation up 54%.
  - Restructuring of the youth flag football league to include younger ages helped drive the participation up 61%.
  - Fall youth soccer league participation increased by 6%.
  - Summer playground program participation increased by 12%.
  - The City introduced a golf program that hit capacity in its first two seasons.
  - Unity Dance Academy recital program participation increased by 12%.
  - Youth tennis programs participation increased by approximately 28%.
- With the increase in youth sports comes the need for additional outdoor athletic facilities, the City is currently approaching capacity for its evening leagues for the youth baseball/softball/t-ball program. For the past few years the City has been renting tennis court space (in the amount of \$1,100) to fill the need for adult tennis lessons. The city does not currently have a location with more than three courts. Soccer fields are rented from the NEW United Soccer Club at the USA Youth Sports Complex for youth soccer league games/practices. Total rent for one season is approximately \$7,500.

- The Recreation Division has been re-focusing their marketing efforts over the past couple years. It's presence on social media, particularly Facebook, has helped connect it to customers. Facebook use for the department has increased 137% over the past two years. New marketing methods were put in place such as linking the department Facebook page to its Twitter page, creating a series of radio advertisements to promote youth sports leagues/camps, implementing an Instagram account, and creative procedures implemented in the monthly e-newsletter. The Recreation Department also places a high priority on keeping its website current, recognizing that this is the go-to place for customers to find the most up-to-date program/activity information.

## Recommendations for Park and Recreation Provision

The Appleton Park and Recreation Department's Five-Year Capital Improvements Plan identifies numerous improvements planned between 2017 and 2021. While these are summarized here, it should be recognized that these are likely to change based upon the availability of funding, grant cycles, evolving needs, future prioritization of projects, or other factors.

### 2017 Scheduled Improvements

- Erb Park pool improvements
- new playground equipment at Kiwanis Park
- acquisition of land for new southeast community park
- skate park phase two for Telulah Park
- new tennis courts at Erb Park
- construct hardscape/ADA improvements and water feature constructed at Scheig Center
- construct riverfront trail at Lutz Park/Appleton Yacht Club

### 2018 Scheduled Improvements

- construct parking lot and pavilion; demolish and replace Jones building and walkways at Appleton Memorial Park
- paint water slide structure, re-coat pool, and upgrade sand play area at Mead Park
- new playground equipment and rubber surface at Pierce Park
- reconstruct parking lot at Reid Golf Course
- site development for new southeast community park
- construct trail from Trolley Square Trestle to Ellen Kort Park
- construct hardscape/ADA improvements at Scheig Center
- construct Telulah Park riverfront trail phase one

### 2019 Scheduled Improvements

- construct trail, upgrade fences, and install irrigation and lighting at Appleton Memorial Park
- install new splash pad at Derks Park
- construction at Ellen Kort Park and Jones Park
- new playground equipment at Linwood Park
- pave paths and update bathrooms at Reid Golf Course
- develop ball diamonds at new southeast community park
- riverfront development phase two at Telulah Park
- new tennis courts at Jaycee Park
- construct hardscape/ADA improvements at Scheig Center



- construct trails for Foremost Trestle

### 2020 Scheduled Improvements

- construct Northland Avenue parking lot and synthetic turf fields; new playground and rubber surface at Appleton Memorial Park
- develop athletic fields at new southeast community park
- construct Riverview Gardens Trail

### 2021 Scheduled Improvements

- construct new splash pad at Appleton Memorial Park
- new playground equipment at Jaycee Park
- Reid Golf Course renovations
- develop pavilion and hardscapes at new southeast community park
- new tennis courts at Linwood Park
- construct Lutz to Vulcan Trail
- construct WE Energies Trail



*Figure 6 Aztec dancers perform in City Park*

In addition to these planned improvements, the Parks and Recreation Department has budgeted \$50,000 per year for ADA improvements throughout the park system on its 2017 5-year Capital Improvements Program. The Parks and Recreation Department has also budgeted and between \$10,000 and \$30,000 per year for Statue and Monument Restoration on various City properties. \$40,000-\$100,000 per year is budgeted for the Scheig Center for the years 2017-2019 and \$47,500-\$175,000 per year is budgeted from Reid Golf Course for the years 2018-2021. Additional money is budgeted for pavilions, restrooms, athletic fields, playground areas, and other park facilities over the course of the 5-year CIP.

### Recreational Programs

The Parks and Recreation Department offers an extensive array of sports, socialization, and educational programs using both the City's facilities and other venues, such as school district pools and gymnasiums. Activities are provided for all age groups. Classes are grouped in categories including early childhood, youth, adult, senior, and healthy lifestyles. Registration is available by mail, in the office, or via the internet.



*Figure 7 Concert-goers enjoy music in Jones Park*

### Recreational Programs Offered by the City of Appleton for Selected Age Groups

Young Children	Youth Programs	Teen Programs	Adult Programs	Older Adults
Baseball Friday Fun Fun Runs Karate Fun Little Hitters Tennis Little Learners Soccer Softball T-Ball Teacher and Me Tot Time Tumbling Golf Sports Exploration Swim lessons	Acrobatics Archery Baseball Basketball Camp APRD Dance Flag Football Fun Runs Golf Karate Fun Kickball KidStage Open Gym Parkour Playground Program Scuba Skateboarding Snorkeling Soccer Softball Special Events STEM Programs Swim Lessons T-Ball Tennis Urban Riders Yoga	Archery Dance Dance Fun Runs Junior Leader Kayak Kickboxing Open Gym Parkour Recreational Rowing Running Program Scuba Self Defense Snorkeling Special Events STEM Programs Swim Lessons Tennis Trips Yoga	Bootcamp Dance Flag Football Kayak Kickboxing Recreational Rowing Running Program Scuba Self Defense Snorkel Softball Spanish Special Events Strength SUP Yoga Swim Lessons Tennis Trips Water Aerobics Yoga Zumba	Forever Fit Slow Stretch Special Events Stretch/Strength Swim Lessons Trips Walking Group

## Accessibility

The City of Appleton Parks and Recreation proudly strives to increase the ability for everyone to experience and participate in all areas and activities. Meeting this goal is an on-going process and we understand that some of our parks, parks facilities, and recreation programs are not fully accessible.

### Accessible Recreation Programs

The benefits of recreation extend far beyond the soccer field or the dance floor. The skills that are learned and practiced during leisure time provide a tremendous foundation for life. For an individual with a disability, recreation activities can improve self-confidence, provide socialization opportunities, and reinforce a sense of teamwork and tolerance. They can establish friendships and gain independence. Reasonable accommodations are made on an individual basis for recreation programs. If visitors require special accommodation in order to participate, they are asked to contact City staff to make arrangements.

### Accessible Parks

The City of Appleton parks are continually receiving updates to meet the needs of everyone. These updates range from accessible playgrounds, sidewalks, parking lots, basketball courts and tennis courts.

### Accessible Facilities

The City of Appleton is committed to improving accessibility to parks and pools facilities, and ensure they are safe and secure for your needs. Some of the on-going improvements include accessible pools, bathrooms, concessions, drinking fountains, and egresses.





## Objectives and Policies

Appleton will provide a variety of parks and recreational programs to fulfill its mission: “Building communities and enriching lives where we live, work and play.” This will be carried out through the implementation of the following goals, objectives, and policies:

### Park and Open Space Acquisition

**18.1 OBJECTIVE: Identify land for acquisition, or opportunities to share facilities, to provide adequate access to parks in developed parts of Appleton where there are no existing parks.**

18.1.1 As noted above, there are areas within the developed part of Appleton and parts of adjoining towns that may someday come into Appleton, that are not adequately served by existing parks. The City should seek to provide desired facilities within these areas in partnership with other stakeholders. Priorities may include partnering with the Appleton Area School District to provide public access and recreational facilities for residents in the surrounding neighborhoods.

18.1.2 Acquire and develop additional park areas in neighborhoods where residential density is expected to increase through redevelopment activities. These may include remnant parcels along the railroad track north of downtown, sites along the Fox River, and publicly or privately-owned pocket parks and plazas on individual redevelopment sites.

**18.2 OBJECTIVE: Continue to work with land developers and municipalities to acquire new park land through dedication or other means, as new development occurs.**

18.2.1 Continue park land and trail dedication, or fee-in-lieu-of land dedication requirements for all new residential development. Additional land should be required for new development in the north, far southeast, and southwest parts of Appleton and its future growth area.

18.2.2 Where development may occur in adjacent municipalities, the City should work with the municipality to identify suitable locations, require dedication, and develop park facilities to meet the needs of current and potential future Appleton residents.

**18.3 OBJECTIVE: Develop the City's park system as an interconnected network of sites linked by greenways and trails.**

18.3.1 Create linkages between parks with long-term goal to have the City's parks arranged as nodes connected by recreational or environmental corridors. Stormwater drainageways, floodplains and wetland areas, utility corridors, railroad corridors, and other greenways may serve this purpose.

18.3.2 Implement the recommendations contained within the 2016 Appleton Trails Master Plan.

### Park and Recreation Facilities Development

**18.4 OBJECTIVE: Continue to make parks and recreation facilities and programs as efficient and effective as possible.**

18.4.1 Where it makes sense, adopt practices to cluster or consolidate dedicated athletic fields in order to reduce maintenance costs and to provide greater flexibility for the

use of neighborhood parks. Neighborhood parks are typically small facilities. Installation of large athletic fields intended for a single, or small number of uses, can eliminate the potential for other activities to occur. Additionally, having these dedicated athletic fields scattered throughout the city can increase maintenance and operational costs.

- 18.4.2 Preserve the maximum flexibility for use of neighborhood parks while simultaneously reducing costs by concentrating similar dedicated-purpose fields in a limited number of central locations.
- 18.4.3 Investigate and implement technologies that reduce maintenance costs or allow more intensive use of park facilities.
- 18.4.4 Continue to consider alternative approaches that may help to mitigate the impacts of park use, or reduce maintenance costs. For example, artificial turf can bear more intensive use than a conventional grass playing field with less maintenance, but has a higher installation and replacement cost, and may contribute to stormwater runoff. The use of naturalized plantings can reduce mowing requirements and have environmental benefits, but may not be an aesthetic accepted by all members of the community. The benefits and drawbacks to practices such as these should be weighed when contemplating alternatives.
- 18.4.5 Monitor and assess the demand for new facilities related to specific emerging or growing recreational pursuits.
- 18.4.6 Complete a needs assessment and market analysis to explore how the City should provide indoor recreation and cultural services and facilities necessary to serve the growing needs of the community.
- 18.4.7 Complete a needs assessment for outdoor athletic fields as they relate to the growth of youth and adult programs and future needs.

**18.5 OBJECTIVE: Expand and develop additional park and recreational facilities along the Fox River.**

- 18.5.1 Plan, design, and construct additional facilities to facilitate greater access and enjoyment of the river including but not limited to boat launch and parking, canoe/kayak launch, additional trail facilities, trail heads, trail parking, and wayfinding signage.
- 18.5.2 Plan, design, and construct Jones Park improvements in conjunction with the Exhibition Center in order to create stronger linkages between downtown and the river, while maximizing the visitor experience and creating a stronger downtown neighborhood.
- 18.5.3 Explore and foster partnerships with other agencies and programs with compatible missions, including but not limited to the Fox River Navigation System Authority, Outagamie County, Fox Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region.

**18.6 OBJECTIVE: Plan, design, and develop additional parks and recreational facilities that meet current and emerging needs of the community.**

- 18.6.1 Plan, design, and construct additional facilities to meet the needs of the community, including but not limited to a recreation center to address the growing

demand on programs and rented space, which the Department currently contracts for.

18.6.2 Plan, design and construct new facilities to better serve those areas of the community where service coverage gaps exist as discussed earlier in this chapter.

18.6.3 Evaluate potential policies, park improvements, or new facilities to accommodate the needs of dog owners, including but not limited to downtown area neighborhoods.

**18.7 OBJECTIVE: Continue to implement the Capital Improvement Plan for development of specific parks and facilities.**

### Recreational Programs

**18.8 OBJECTIVE: Engage, leverage and develop community and corporate partners to optimize and broaden programs and services.**

18.8.1 Plan with the numerous recreation service providers throughout our community. It is important we stay on top of trends and strengthen partnerships to become more responsive to community needs. Community partnerships play a vital role in our future success and ability to broaden our program offerings.

**18.9 OBJECTIVE: Expand public outreach and participation in community groups, organizations and events to advocate our programs, facilities, and services.**

**18.10 OBJECTIVE: Enhance health and wellness within our community and provide opportunities for learning and socialization to promote personal growth and well-being for adults in our community.**

18.10.1 With the surge of baby boomers coming into the older adult population, it will be critical for us to continually evaluate our program offerings and services to this demographic.

**18.11 OBJECTIVE: Working together with community partners, increase programming directed to minority and cultural interests, and for persons who are physically or cognitively challenged.**

18.11.1 Appleton will continue to program activities of cultural interest, as well as provide facilities and activities that are universally accessible.

**18.12 OBJECTIVE Develop and deliver meaningful outdoor adventure and educational experiences for members of our community to help connect them to the outdoors. Work to promote the trail system and increase use of our outdoor amenities.**

### Management and Operations

**18.13 OBJECTIVE: Continue to enhance Departmental management and operations to better serve the community.**

18.13.1 Conduct a periodic review of Appleton's park land dedication ordinance as well as impact fees for development of park facilities.

18.13.2 Evaluate impact fees as a means of funding park capital costs.

18.13.3 Continue the Park and Recreation Department's practice of evaluating the carrying capacity of park facilities and establishing standards or use limits that protect them from damage caused by over-use. This policy mitigates damage to

facilities that would incur costs to repair and deprive residents of the use of the facility while repairs were made.

18.13.4 Continue the Park and Recreation Departments commitment to, and implementation of "best practices" for sustainable park development and operations including but not limited to:

- acquisition of land for parks as well as the preservation of natural features;
- development of paths and trails that facilitate non-motorized transportation modes;
- specification of local, recycled content, or other products that minimize processing impacts to the environment;
- improvements in energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources;
- adoption of design elements that enhance the environment and reduce maintenance costs; and
- utilization of low-maintenance and native planting materials

18.13.5 Identify and evaluate barriers to providing in-person customer service at current facilities.

18.13.6 Continue self-operation of Reid Golf Course to ensure the needs of the community are met.